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ABSTRACT

A project compared the results of two 1989 studies examining the last decade (1978-88) of home economics education college graduates from Pennsylvania and Alabama. Both studies used a mailed questionnaire to graduates. Tincher used a 100 percent sample of Alabama's 401 graduates; Olson used a 50 percent stratified random sample of 728 Pennsylvania graduates. Both studies obtained similar sample sizes of 170 (Tincher) and 184 (Olson), with respective return rates of 57.8 percent and 56.9 percent. Findings showed similarities and differences in the occupational behavior of home economics education graduates. Similarities were as follows: most graduates were from state universities; the majority were married; more than 50% completed coursework beyond the bachelor's; common fields of study for both groups beyond the bachelor's were elementary education, early childhood, administration, guidance and counseling, special education, adult education, and computer education; and most were currently employed. Differences observed in graduates included the following: there were twice as many Pennsylvania graduates; Pennsylvania graduates made $5,000-10,000 more per year; Pennsylvania graduates tended to be older; nearly twice as many Alabama graduates continued their education at the master's degree level, whereas nearly twice as many Pennsylvania graduates continued their education at the doctoral level; and more Alabama graduates were actually teaching home economics. (Appendixes contain 15 references and 4 tables.) (YLB)

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OBSERVATIONS OF HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION COLLEGE GRADUATES DURING THE LAST DECADE: PENNSYLVANIA AND ALABAMA

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to compare the results of two 1989 studies examining the last decade (1978-1988) of home economics education college graduates from Pennsylvania and Alabama. An examination of similar and different patterns and trends are rated in the members of home economics education graduates, employment patterns of graduates, and the profiles of the graduates themselves. There are growing concerns about the large declines in the number of home economics education graduates over the last decade, coupled by a decline of available teaching positions in the field.

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Background

"Declining enrollment trends in home economics have stimulated exploration of causes and cures" (Stewart & Daniel, 1989, p. 50). Home economics education has suffered the largest declines within the field of home economics (Green, 1989; Redick, King, & Vloch, 1983) and greater than the declines observed in education in general (Redick et al., 1983). By 1988, 62% of all home economics education programs in the nation had five or fewer graduates from these programs (Weis & Pomraning, 1988). Often the tight job market has been cited as the reason for the enrollment decline (Hall, Wallace, & Lee, 1983; Peterson & Roscoe, 1983; McClelland & Plihal, 1987; Harper, 1981). Rees, Ezell, and Firebaugh (1989) feel this trend in home economics is to specialize rather than generalize.

Lambert and Clayton (1985) found that of those in a national 1983 survey of home economics education graduates, 50% secured teaching positions and 8% were in Cooperative Extension Services.

Rossman, Parsons, and Holman (1983) reported that of 86% of home economics graduates of a major midwestern university from the classes of 1976 to 1981, 53% did teach in schools and 32% were employed in positions which they identified as clearly related to their home economics degree. Yocum (1980) conducted a follow-up survey of Alabama graduates during the early to mid 70s and found that of the 71.2% of those employed, only 23% were teaching home economics in 1979.

Procedures

This article examines two states' home economics college graduates' employment experiences during 1978-1988. Both studies used a mailed questionnaire to home economics education graduates with names and addresses supplied by the home economics teacher education programs in the respective states. Tincher (1989) used a 100% sample of Alabama's 401 graduates, while Olson (1989) used a 50% stratified (by degree granting college type--public, private, state-related, and current place of residence--in Pennsylvania or outside Pennsylvania) random sample of 728 graduates. Both studies obtained similar sample sizes of 170 (Tincher, 1989) and 184 (Olson, 1989), with respective return rates of 57.8% and 56.9%. Although similar sample sizes are presented, the population size differs between the states, with Pennsylvania having nearly twice the number of graduates during this time period.

Findings

The income level of graduates differed between the states. The largest proportion of Alabama graduates (23.5%) earned between $15,000 and $20,000 annually, while Pennsylvania graduates made between $25,000 and $30,000 annually (27.7%) (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1

Graduates of Alabama's programs came from state universities (55.9%) with fewer coming from state-related (9.5%) and private (4.6%) universities and colleges. Pennsylvania graduates were more evenly distributed in the type of college or university where

they received their degree with most (47.4%) coming from state universities, followed by private (32.7%) and state-related (19.9%) universities of the 12 institutions offering degrees in home economics education during this time period.

Most of Alabama's graduates at the time of the survey were between 24-29 years of age (43%), while Pennsylvania graduates tended to fall between 30 to 39 years of age (67.9%). The majority of graduates from both states were married (Alabama, 69.6%; Pennsylvania, 81%). Of those graduates with children, most children were of preschool age (36.5% in Alabama and 70.1% in Pennsylvania). Of those graduates continuing their education and receiving a master's degree, 38.8% came from Alabama, while only 16.8% did so in Pennsylvania. However, a greater proportion of graduates continued on for the doctorate in Pennsylvania (1.1%) than in Alabama (.6%).

A slightly higher proportion (63.6%) of Pennsylvania graduates than Alabama graduates (54.7%) took coursework beyond the bachelor's. Of the fields of study pursued by graduates at the graduate level, most (48.4%) of Alabama's graduates continued in home economics education, while most (28.2%) of Pennsylvania's graduates went on to home economics specialty fields (see Table 2). Of the other fields studied by graduates, fields common to both Pennsylvania and Alabama graduates were: elementary education, early childhood, administration, guidance and counseling, special education, adult education, and computer education.

Insert Table 2

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A larger proportion of Pennsylvania graduates (87%) where currently employed at the time of the survey, than Alabama (71.2%) graduates (see Table 3). A much higher rate (17.1%) of choice of full-time homemaking since graduation is seen for Alabama graduates than Pennsylvania graduates (.5%). Of those currently teaching, 41.2% of the entire sample was teaching home economics in Alabama, compared to 32.1% in Pennsylvania (see Table 4). Of those not employed in Alabama, 25% indicated they were not employed because they could not find employment in home economics, while 16.7% indicated no financial need. In Pennsylvania, those not employed were doing so out of choice and the need to care for their young children.

Insert Tables 3 and 4

Conclusions/Discussion

Based on these two studies (Olson, 1989; Tincher, 1989), similarities and differences were observed about the occupational behavior patterns of home economics education graduates. Similarities included the following:

1. Most graduates were from state universities.
2. The majority of graduates were married.
3. The majority completed coursework beyond the bachelor's.
4. Common fields of study for both groups beyond the bachelor's were: elementary education, early childhood, administration, guidance and counseling, special education, adult education, and computer education.
5. Most graduates were currently employed.

Observed differences observed in graduates were:

1. There were twice as many Pennsylvania graduates as Alabama graduates during this time period.
2. Pennsylvania graduates appeared to be making $5,000-10,000 more per year than Alabama graduates.
3. Pennsylvania graduates tended to be older.
4. Nearly twice as many Alabama graduates continued their education at the master's degree level, whereas nearly twice as many Pennsylvania graduates continued their education at the doctoral level.
5. Most Alabama graduates continued their graduate work in home economics education, while Pennsylvania graduates continued their work in specialty areas of home economics.
6. A much higher rate of choice of full-time homemaking is seen in Alabama graduates over Pennsylvania graduates, and the rationale for choosing full-time home-making differed between the groups.
7. More Alabama graduates were actually teaching home economics than Pennsylvania graduates.

Based on these two studies, a number of similarities and differences were observed for 1978-1988 home economics education college graduates. While these are only two studies, more research needs to be done. How do graduates from other states compare and what accounts for the differences in career path and choice? Continued education? Can patterns and trends be observed differently in different parts of the country? What factors have

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contributed to their differences? Is there a cultural difference between women in the north and women of the south? For example, New England Home Economics Teacher Educators and State Supervisors (1988) reported a real shortage of home economic education graduate for the New England area. Based on Olson's (1989) study, this pattern seems to also be true for Pennsylvania, but less true for Alabama (Tincher, 1989).

Table 1

Income Levels of Graduates

Earnings	Alabama[1]	Pennsylvania[2]
$10,000 or below	3.5%	13.6%
$10-15,000	3.5%	8.7%
$15-20,000	23.5%	11.7%
$20-25,000	16.5%	11.4%
$25-30,000	21.5%	27.7%
$30-35,000	4.7%	1.6%
$35-40,000	1.2%	1.1%
$40,000 and up	--	2.2%
Non-response	18.8%	6.0%

[1]Tincher (1989), Table 18, p. 84.
[2]Olson (1989), Table B14, p. 154.

Table 2

Field of Specialization at Graduate Level

Field of Study	Alabama[1]	Pennsylvania[2]
Home Economics Education	48.4%	9.4%
Home Economics	18.3%	28.2%
Business	4.3%	13.7%
Education	--	27.4%
Other	2.9%	21.4%

[1]Tincher, 1989, Table 13, p. 72.
[2]Olson, 1989, Table B9, p. 150.

Table 3

Employment Status

Current	Alabama	Pennsylvania
Employed	71.2%	87.0%
Not employed	28.8%	13.0%
Never worked since graduation, by choice	17.1%	.5%

[1]Tincher (1989)
[2]Olson (1989)

Table 4

Currently Teaching and Currently Teaching Home Economics

	Alabama[1]	Pennsylvania[2]
Currently teaching	50.6%	16.3%
Currently teaching home economics	41.2%	32.1%

[1]Tincher (1989)
[2]Olson (1989)

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